FENOLLOSA ON THE NOH AND HIS INFLUENCE ON YEATS

By Tetsuwo Maekawa

ERNEST Francisco Fenollosa (1853—1908)'s widow, Mary, had her husband's lifelong masterpiece, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* published in 1912. In her preface, Mary Fenollosa notes that her husband's remains had been transferred from London to Otsu and remarks that though her husband's ashes lie in Miidera Temple, the fire of his thoughts and ideals shines brightly in the pages of this book and will burn forever.

Epochs had an immediate impact on the art and literary world of the time. Poets as well as art historians and connoisseurs greeted its publication with enthusiasm. But we must also draw attention to Fenollosa's other works, many of which were published posthumously: his English translations of Noh plays, his studies of Noh, his translations of Chinese poetry and his studies of written Chinese characters as a medium for poetry. Through all of these, Fenollosa has had a considerable influence on twentieth century British and American literature, though his wife had no such expectations when she wrote her preface.

Among those most immediately impressed by Fenollosa's masterpiece was a young, energetic and articulate American poet, Ezra Weston Loomis Pound (1885—1972). At that time Pound was in London, and he met Mary Fenollosa there and sought her permission to read and, if possible, publish her husband's other manuscripts. Impressed by Pound's enthusiasm, Mary agreed, and on her return to America gathered all of her husband's notes, translations and manuscripts and sent them to Pound in London, late in November 1913. In her letters to Ezra Pound dated 24 and 25 November 1913 Mary Fenollosa describes how she sent them (cf.

S. Kodama ed. *Ezra Pound & Japan*, pp. 5—7).

As for Ezra Pound, while he was working on the notes and manuscripts, he wrote to William Carlos Williams (1883—1963) on 19 December 1913, saying that he was very placid and happy and busy and that he had all old Fenollosa's treasures in mss (cf. D. D. Paige ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907—1914*, p. 65). He worked on them for several years. From Fenollosa's literal translations of Chinese poems he shaped the poetical work, *Cathay*, which was published in 1915. He edited Fenellosa's notebooks on the Noh and his translations of Japanese Noh plays and thus produced *Certain Noble Plays of Japan*, a limited edition of which was published in Ireland in 1916, and, also published in 1916, *Noh or Accomplishment—A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan*. In 1920, after refusals from a number of publishers, he arranged for the publication of that stimulating essay, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*.

These works exerted a considerable influence, through Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888—1965), on modern English and American poets in general. Moreover, Pound was, for a time, secretary to the noted Irish poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats (1865—1939). There seems little doubt that, due to the combined influence of Pound and Fenollosa, Yeats wrote what are called 'Noh plays' : *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919), *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1910), *Calvary* (1920) and *The Cat and the Moon* (1926). We may add to these *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1935), *Purgatory* (1939) and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939).

In *The Death of Cuchulain*, an *Old Man* looking like something out of mythology says on behalf of Yeats:

> I wanted an audience of fifty or a hundred, and if there are more, I beg them not to shuffle their feet or talk when the actors are speaking. I am sure that as I am producing a play for people I like, it is not probable, in this vile age, that they will be more in number than those who listened to the first performance of Milton's *Comus*. On the present occasion they must know the old epics and Mr. Yeats' plays about them; such people, however poor, have libraries of their

own. (*The Death of Cuchulain*)

Yeats, then, intended to write dance plays for an audience of fifty or one hundred, who know the old epics and have libraries of their own, like the audience at a Japanese Noh play. As for the stage setting of Yeats's Noh plays, it is also very similar to that of Japanese Noh plays, as the following stage direction for Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* shows:

> *The stage is any bare place in a room close to the wall. A screen, with a pattern of mountain and sky, can stand against the wall, or a curtain with a like pattern hang upon it, but the pattern must only symbolise or suggest. One Musician enters and then two others; the first stands singing, as in preceding plays, while the others take their places. Then all three sit down against the wall by their instruments, which are already there—a drum, a zither, and a flute. Or they unfold a cloth as in 'At the Hawk's Well', while the instruments are carried in.* (*The Dreaming of the Bones*)

In *Noh or Accomplishment—A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan*, the Fenollosa translation of 'the Programme, or Ban-gumi,' for the Noh is included by Ezra Pound. The Programme is the schedule of plays for a single day of performance. This means, then, that both Pound and Fenollosa are interested in the structure of the Programme. The text of the Programme runs as follows:

> Now the Ka-den-sho, or secret book of Noh, decrees that the arrangement of plays shall be as follows:
>
> 'A "Shugen" must come first. And Shugen, or congratulatory pieces, are limited to Noh of the Gods (that is, to pieces connected with some religious rite), because this country of the rising sun is the country of the gods. The gods have guarded the country from Kami-yo (the age of the gods) down to the time of the present reign. So in praise of them and in prayer we perform first this Kami-No.
>
> The Shura, or battle-piece, comes second, for the gods and emperors pacified this country with bows and arrows; therefore, to defeat and put out the devils, we perform the Shura.

Kazura, or Onna-mono, "wig-pieces", or pieces for females, come third. Many think that any Kazura will do, but it must be a "female Kazura", for after battle comes peace, or Yu-gen, mysterious calm, and in time of peace the cases of love come to pass. Moreover, the battle-pieces are limited to men; so we now have the female piece in contrast. ...

The fourth piece is Oni-No, or the Noh of spirits. After battle comes peace and glory, but they soon depart in their turn. The glory and pleasures of man are not reliable at all. Life is like a dream and goes with speed of lightning. It is like a dewdrop in the morning; it soon falls and is broken. To suggest these things and to lift up the heart for Buddha (to produce "Bodai-shin") we have this sort of play after the Onna-mono, that is, just after the middle of the programme, when some of the audience will be a little tired. Just to wake them out of their sleep we have these plays of spirits ("Oni"). Here are shown the struggles and the sins of mortals, and the audience, even while they sit for pleasure, will begin to think about Buddha and the coming world. ...

Fifth comes a piece which has some bearing upon the moral duties of man, Jin, Gi, Rei, Chi, Shin; that is, Compassion, Righteousness, Politeness, Wisdom, and Faithfulness. This fifth piece teaches the duties of man here in this world as the fourth piece represents the results of carelessness to such duties.

Sixth comes another Shugen, or congratulatory piece. as conclusion to the whole performance, to congratulate and call down blessings on the lords present, the actors themselves, and the place. To show that though the spring may pass, still there is a time of its return, this Shugen is put in again just as at the beginning.' (Kenner (ed.), *The Translations of Ezra Pound*, pp. 219—21)

This is what is written in the Ka-den-sho, which is not *The Fuushi-Kaden* (『風姿花伝』) written by Motokiyo Zeami (世阿弥元清 1363—1443), but what is called "The Hachijou Kaden-sho" (*The Hachijou Edition of the Kaden-sho* 『八帖花伝書』). We could classify the abovementioned Noh plays by W. B. Yeats on the principles of the Noh Programme, even

if yeats himself might not have been aware of the Programme. If we select a representative play for each section of the Programme from among the Noh plays translated by Fenollosa and compare it with a corresponding Noh play by Yeats classified on Noh-Programme principles, we may find pathways of cultural transmission through Fenollosa's translation of Noh plays.

I have classified Yeats's Noh plays into six classes corresponding to the six sections of the Japanese Noh Programme. Among them I have classified *At the Hawk's Well* as a Shugen play, an example of the Noh of the Gods, partly because it is the first play in the Cuchulain Cycle, dealing with the youngest phase of the hero Cuchulain, and partly because the *Young Man*, who corresponds to the part of Tsure-Waki in a Japanese Noh play, suggests his own demigod status in saying:

> My luck is strong,
> It will not leave me waiting, nor will they
> That dance among the stones put me asleep;
> If I grow drowsy I can pierce my foot.
> (*At the Hawk's Well*)

The strength of his luck is soon demonstrated, as water comes from a well long choked up and dry, and splashes and glitters. This dance play by Yeats bears a striking resemblance to the Shugen play, *Yourou* (『養老』), written by Motokiyo Zeami.

The text of Fenollosa's translation of *Yourou*, which Ezra Pound omitted from *'Noh' or Accomplishment*, is a typical Shugen play, which is performed in praise of the Gods who have guarded an affectionate and dutiful son (Tsure) and his father (lst Shite) and brought the medicine water from a wonderful fountain to them. The water, which consoles one in old age, prolongs their lives. The text runs as follows:

> SHITE
>
> Yes. This is my son. In the morning in the evening, he goes to the mountain, and takes fuel, and feeds me. Once being weary of mt. road, he dipped this water in his hand and drank it, but strangely his heart was quite refreshed, and he recovered.

TSURE

Thinking the medicine water of the house of Sennin will be such, I went home dipping the water and carrying it, and gave to the father and mother.

SHITE

We drank it, and unconsciously we forgot our age.

TSURE

From that it was not difficult to get up so early in the morning.

TOGETHER

It was not so solitary even when we were awakened from dreams in the night. Some vigour and courage came to us: and as this true clear water consoles our age unceasingly, it is called the Fall of Yōrō.

(Quoted from *The Drama of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard Taylor, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, p. 123)

When we compare this passage to the following lines from *At the Hawk's Well*, we can easily recognize some resemblance between these two plays:

Young Man

You can, it may be,
Lead me to what I seek, a well wherein
Three hazels drop their nuts and with red leaves,
And where a solitary girl keeps watch
Among grey boulders. He who drinks, they say,
Of that miraculous water lives for ever.

(*At the Hawk's Well*)

First Musician

I have heard water splash; it comes, it comes;
Look where it glitters.

(*Ibid.*)

Similarly, in the Shura section, or the battle-piece section, we can compare *Tamura* (『田村』), or *Tsunemasa* (『経政』), with *The Only*

Jealousy of Emer, or *Purgatory*. In *Tamura* the spirit of Tamuramaro Sakanoue (2nd Shite) fights against the evil spirits of Suzuka in Ise. pacifying the region, and thereby Japan as a whole, while in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, Cuchulain, who has been fighting against the Waves and is seriously wounded, is saved from death by his wife Emer's bitter renunciation of his love. Emer's mental conflict before the Woman of the Sidhe, who dances around the Ghost of Cuchulain, is performed in a form of Phantasmal Noh (夢幻能). At the end of the play, the *Musicians* sing Emer's tragedy as follows:

> Why does your heart beat thus?
> Plain to be understood,
> I have met in a man's house
> A statue of solitude,
> Moving there and walking;
> Its strange heart beating fast
> For all our talking.
> O still that heart at last...
>
> O bitter reward
> Of many tragic tomb!
> And we though astonished are dumb
> Or give but a sigh and a word,
> A passing word.
>
> (*The Only Jealousy of Emer*)

As Leonard E. Nathan says in his *The Tragic Drama of William Butler Yeats*:

> *The Only Jealousy of Emer* is the finest example among those plays... which adhere scrupulously to the Noh convention and bring the supernatural into the action as part of the given of that convention. (Leonard E. Nathan, *The Tragic Drame of William Butler Yeats*, p. 223)

Similarly, in the Kazura or Onna-mono section in which a woman plays the part of Shite, *Hagoromo* (『羽衣』), can be compared to *The*

King of the Great Clock Tower. In *Hagoromo,* Tennin (天人) dances to the following semi-choruses:

SEMI-CHORUS

And now the robe of mist, presaging spring, a colour-smell as this wonderful maiden's skirt—left, right, left! The rustling of flowers, the putting on of the feathery sleeve; they bend in air with the dancing.

SEMI-CHORUS

Many are the joys in the east. She who is the colour-person of the moon takes her middle-night in the sky. She marks her three fives with this dancing, as a shadow of all fulfilments... After a little time, only a little time, can the mantle be upon the wind that was spread over Matsubara or over Ashitaka the mountain, though the clouds lie in its heaven like a plain awash with sea. Fuji is gone; the great peak of Fuji is blotted out little by little. It melts into the upper mist. In this way she (the Tennin) is lost to sight.
(*The Translations,* p. 314)

In *The King of the Great Clock Tower,* the *1st Attendant* sings of the dance in Tir-nan-oge:

There every lover is a happy rogue;
And should he speak, it is the speech of birds.
No thought has he, and therefore has no words,
No thought because no clock, no clock because
If I consider deeply, lad and lass,
Nerve touching nerve upon that happy ground,
Are bobbins where all time is bound and wound.
(*The King of the Great Clock Tower*)

Fenollosa's legacy of works and ideas, then, has functioned as an agent of cultural transmission between East and West, thus fulfilling his own hopes and dreams. A comparison of Fenollosa's translation of *Nishikigi* (『錦木』) with Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones,* which it appears to have influenced, both being classifiable as Oni-Noh or the Noh of spirits, will most clearly show this pathway of transmission.

Nishikigi is a play in two acts by Motokiyo Zeami. It is a typical Phantasmal Noh (夢幻能), whose hero and heroine are ghosts who have been long dead. As it is a Phantasmal Noh play, it can transcend time. Time in the play, which does not always flow in an orderly manner from past to future, and in which phantoms from the past appear, can be viewed as corresponding to our own actual time. Thus the characters who have entered another dimension (the Shite and the Tsure) are juxtaposed with the living character (the Waki).

The Waki of *Nishikigi* is a priest on a pilgrimage. He has been charmed by a love song which alludes to Mt Shinobu (信夫山), and has just arrived at the village of Kefu (Kyoo 狹布). As he arrives he sees a man and a woman approaching. The man has a wooden love-charm called 'Nishikigi' (錦木), 'silky wood with the charms painted in it as fine as the web you'd get in the grass-cloth of Shinobu'. The woman has a cloth which she appears to have woven and which she says is called '*hosonuno*' (細布). They have loved each other for how many years nobody knows. But they have not been united yet. Owing to their craving attachment they can neither wake nor sleep. When the priest asks them, "And you would tell me then that Nishikigi and Hosonuno are names bound over with love?" they answer as follows:

SHITE

They are names in love's list surely. Every day for a year, for three years come to their full, the wands, Nishikigi, were set up, until there were a thousand in all. And they are in song in your time, and will be. 'Chidzuka (千束)' they call them.

TSURE

These names are surely a byword.
As the cloth Hosonuno is narrow of weft,
More narrow than the breast,
We call by this name any woman
Whose breasts are hard to come nigh to.
It is a name in books of love.

(Ernest Fenollosa, *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* ed. by

Ezra Pound, p. 87)

They go on singing their sad story, and when the pilgrim asks them 'to tell out all the story,' they respond as follows:

SHITE

There is an old custom of this country. We make wands of mediation and deck them with symbols and set them before a gate when we are suitors.

TSURE

And we women take up a wand of the man we would meet with, and let the others lie, although a man might come for a hundred nights, it may be, or for a thousand nights in three years, till there were a thousand wands here in the shade of this mountain. We know the funeral cave of such a man, one who had watched out the thousand nights; a bright cave, for they buried him with all his wands. They have named it the 'Cave of the many charms (錦塚).' (*Ibid.* pp. 79—80)

Needless to say, the Cave of the many charms is the man's grave. The man, Shite, and the woman, Tsure, take the priest, the Waki, to the cave. The Chorus, which is the *Jiutai* (地謡) of a Noh play, follows the man's song, which begins with the lines "There's a cold feel in the autumn. / Night comes...," and runs:

And storms; trees giving up their leaf,
Spotted with sudden showers.
Autumn! our feet are clogged
In the dew-drenched, entangled leaves... (*Ibid.* p. 81)

The man and the woman have gone into the cave. This is the *nakairi* (exit of the Shite before interlude 中入) of this Noh play.

In Part Two, the priest's respectful visit to the cave is beginning to have its effect. After he does service to the Buddha for the man and woman, he falls to sleep. In his dream, the priest (the Waki) says:

Strange, what seemed so very old a cave
Is all glittering-bright within,

Like the flicker of fire.
It is like the inside of a house.
They are sitting up a loom,
And heaping up charm-sticks. No,
The hangings are out of old time.
Is it illusion, illusion? (*Ibid.* p. 83)

In the house the woman sets up her loom and weaves *hoso-nuno* and the suitor holds his charm-sticks outside and knocks at the gate. But he gets no answer. In the end, when the charm-sticks have been set up a thousand times, the curse is removed. The Shite sings and dances:

Happy at last and well-starred,
Now comes the eve of betrothal;
We meet for the wine-cup. (*Ibid.* p. 87)

Such is Fenollosa's version of *Nishikigi*. If we compare this with W. B. Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones*, we shall be convinced that Yeats's play is, in a sense, an Irish version of *Nishikigi*, because it is a kind of Phantasmal Noh, in which a *Young Man* who has been fleeing from Dublin, where he fought at the Post Office, the headquarters of the rebels in the Easter Rising, is the Waki, and a *Stranger*, who knows the hiding places in the hills of County Clare, on the western coast of Ireland, is the Shite, and a *Young Girl*, who is the *Stranger*'s love, is the Tsure. The Stranger and the Young Girl are dressed in the costume of seven hundred years ago, and wear heroic masks. They are the ghosts of young lovers, Diarmuid and Dervorgilla who 'brought the Norman in,' and whose 'lips can never meet' owing to their crime against Ireland. They confess their secret to the *Young Man* and ask him to forgive them:

Yes, yes I spoke
Of that most miserable, most accursed pair
Who sold their country into slavery; and yet
They were not wholly miserable and accursed
If somebody of their race at last would say,
'I have forgiven them.'
(*The Dreaming of the Bones*)

Unlike the man and woman in *Nishikigi*, the *Stranger* and the *Young Girl*, who have taken the *Young Man* safely to his destination, are not forgiven by him. The *Young Man* answers:

O, never, never
Shall Diarmuid and Dervorgilla be forgiven.
(*Ibid.*)

As the fifth play, which teaches the duties of man, we can choose the Japanese Noh *Kumasaka*, and Yeats's *Calvary*, which is a kind of Phantasmal Noh or equally *The Death of Cuchulain*, which deals with the end of the heroic age. In *Calvary* the Musicians sing:

1st Musician.
Motionless under the moon-beam,
Up to his feathers in the stream;
Although fish leap, the white heron
Shivers in a dumbfounded dream.
2nd Musician.
God has not died for the white heron.
(*Calvary*)

This is an example of what Christ cannot save. Yeats comments in his notes to the play on Christ:

I have surrounded Him with the images of those He cannot save, not only with the birds, who have served neither God nor Caesar, and await for none or for a different saviour, but with Lazarus and Judas and the Roman soldiers for whom He has died in vain.
(*The Variorum Edition*, p. 790)

At the end of *The Death of Cuchulain* such lines as the following are sung in praise of Cuchulain:

No body like his body
Has modern woman borne, ...
So ends the tale. ...
(*The Death of Cuchulain*)

As the sixth section, the second Shugen, or congratulatory play, we can choose the Japanese Noh *Genjou* (『絃上』), and Yeats's *The Cat and the Moon*, in which a *Lame Beggar* is blessed at the holy well of Saint Cloman and begins to dance, at first clumsily, moving about with his stick, then throws away the stick and dances more and more quickly. Yeats himself writes in his notes to the play:

> I intended my play to be what the Japanese call a 'Kiogen,' and to come as a relaxation of attention between, let us say 'The Hawk's Well' and 'The Dreaming of the Bones,'...
>
> (*The Variorum Edition*, p. 805)

These words suggest that Yeats, too, may have been interested in the Programme of the Noh, or at least in the arrangement of plays for the day advised by *The Hachijou Edition of the Kaden-sho.*

REFERENCES:

Alspach, Russell K. (ed.) *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats.* London. 1966.

Fenollosa, Ernest F. *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design*, in 2 Vols. London. 1912.

Fenollosa, Ernest F. *The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* ed. Ezra Pound. New York. 1956.

Fenollosa, Ernest F. *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry.* ed. Ezra Pound. San Francisco. 1936.

Kenner, Hugh (ed.) *The Translations of Ezra Pound.* London. 1953.

Kodama, Sanehide. (ed.) *Ezra Pound & Japan: Letters & Essays.* Redding Ridge. 1987.

Nathan, Leonard E. *The Tragic Drama of William Butler Yeats: Figures in a Dance.* New York. 1965.

Paige, D. D. (ed.) *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907—1914*, London. 1951.

Taylor, Richard (ed). *The Drama of W. B. Yeats.* New Haven. 1976.